

LETTERS FROM LIFE



THE LIAISON OF INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS OF TORONTO
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The LIAISON OF INDEPENDENT FILMMAKERS OF TORONTO is a non-profit co-operative which supports and encourages independent filmmaking through the exchange of information and access to equipment and facilities. LIFT hosts a program of workshops and monthly screenings and it provides access to information regarding funding sources, festival and grant deadlines and other related matters.

LIFT is supported by its membership, the Canada Council (Media Arts Section), the Ontario Arts Council, Metro Council Cultural Affairs Division, the City of Toronto through the Toronto Arts Council, the National Film Board of Canada, Telefilm, the Ontario Film Development Corporation, the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

Articles published in the LIFT newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors, the Co-op or members of the Board of Directors. Letters to the editor can be sent c/o LIFT, 37 Hanna Avenue, Suite 301, Toronto, Ontario M4K 1K5. Phone, 588-6444; Fax, 588-7017.

LIFT's website address is:

<http://www.inforamp.net/~lift>

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Anyone with questions, suggestions or ideas, please call Lisa at the LIFT office, or e-mail us.

EDITORIAL

Wednesday, April 9, 1997 6:43:04 PM

Message

From: Michael McNamara,qwest@interlog.com,Internet
 Subject: Cockroach
 To: Barbara Mainguy

Hi Barbara I'm not sure when the next newsletter's being mailed out, but I thought you might like to know that my film "The Cockroach That Ate Cincinnati" is going to be opening at the Carlton Cinema on April 25. The film will play for at least a week maybe 2 if our opening week is promising enough. Tell all your friends!

We are essentially self-distributing, but we've got a very nice (low cost) arrangement with Cineplex who are taking care of booking the film into Cinemas that can project 16mm mostly rep cinemas outside of Toronto.

From: Michael McNamara,qwest@interlog.com,Internet
 Subject: Re: Cockroach
 To: Barbara Mainguy

Barbara Mainguy Wrote>I will put news of the opening in the newsletter which will be mailed out on the 21st so might miss the 25th. However, I think you should force cineplex/odeon/polygram to cough up 100 to take advantage of our excellent mail out system direct mail to 800 count 'em 800 indie filmies and arts organizations. A must! I'd love to give you it for free but I am not alone in these decisions and have to justify the newsletter's existence with revenue so must be hard nosed. It is cruel and true.

Here's to tickets sold...

Cheers, Barb

Reply from Michael McNamara see page 17

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I think it's important that we understand that we are entering a time of uncertainty because of grant cutbacks, and we have to be aware that we could go through some difficult times as the new funding scenario falls into place. By taking this into consideration now we can plan to deal with these concerns as they arise Strategy and foresight are everything

David Nancoff

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ON THE COVER: STILL FROM
LETTERS FROM HOME,
MIKE HOOLBOOM

critical dates & dubious deadlines

announcements:

It is a pleasure to introduce LIFT's new Technical Co-ordinator II, Mark Wihak. Mark comes to LIFT via The Saskatchewan Film Pool Co-operative, and Concordia University. You might recall Mark's latest complete film (stories from) The Land of Cain. His current projects include the installation "Interstitial Zone", and a documentary on the painting group The Regina Five.

MEMBERS WRITING GRANTS - F.Y.I. Deanna is currently collecting the price lists of all the companies and supply houses that LIFT has discounts with. The lists would be ideal when putting together budgets, etc. for your upcoming productions; and should be available by mid April for photocopying.

upcoming festival deadlines:

FESTIVAL /LOCATION /DATE: DEADLINE: TELEPHONE: WEBSITE:

QUEER SIGHTINGS

EDMONTON, AB (JUNE 21-28, 1997)	4/25/97			KGULAYET@GPU.SRV.UALBERTA.CA
AUCKLAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL				
TE ARO, WELLINGTON (JULY 11-26, 1997)	4/30/97	(644) 385-0162	ENZEDFF@ACTRIX.GEN.NZ or HTTP://WWW.ENZEDFF.CO.NZ	
WELLINGTON FILM FESTIVAL				
TE ARO, WELLINGTON (JULY 18 AUGUST 2, 1997)	4/30/97	(644) 385-0162	ENZEDFF@ACTRIX.GEN.NZ or HTTP://WWW.ENZEDFF.CO.NZ	
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, DUNEDIN				
TE ARO, WELLINGTON (JULY 25 AUGUST 9, 1997)	4/30/97	(644) 385-0162	ENZEDFF@ACTRIX.GEN.NZ or HTTP://WWW.ENZEDFF.CO.NZ	
INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL, CHRISTCHURCH				
TE ARO, WELLINGTON AUGUST 1-16, 1997)	4/30/97	(644) 385-0162	ENZEDFF@ACTRIX.GEN.NZ or HTTP://WWW.ENZEDFF.CO.NZ	
WINE COUNTRY FILM FESTIVAL				
GLEN ELLEN, CA (JULY 17-AUGUST 10, 1997)	4/30/97	(707) 996-2536		
EBENSEE FILM FESTIVAL OF NATIONS				
LINZ (JUNE 15-21 1997)	5/1/97	+43 0732/673 693		
ODENSE INT'L FILM FESTIVAL				
ODENSE C (AUG 12-16, 1997)	5/1/97	45 66 131372		MAG4KULT@INET.UNI-C.DK
CHICAGO INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL				
CHICAGO, IL (OCT. 9-19/97)	5/30/97	(773) 281-9075		KIDSFEST@FACETS.ORG
BRECKENRIDGE FESTIVAL OF FILM				
BRECKENRIDGE, CO (SEPTEMBER 18-21/97)	05/31/1997	(970) 453-6200		FILMFEST @ BRECKNET.COM
13TH ISRAEL FILM FESTIVAL				
LOS ANGELES CALIFORNIA (11/13/97)	6/1/97	213 532 1199		
LONDON JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL				
LONDON, UK (SEPTEMBER 97)	6/1/97	+44 (0) 171 815 1323/4		
CANADIAN INTERNATIONAL ANNUAL FILM/VIDEO FESTIVAL				
BARRIE, ONTARIO (06/15/1997)		705 737 2729		CIAFF @ INAME.COM
VALLADOLID INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL				
VALLADOLID (OCT. 24 NOVEMBER 1, 1997)	6/30/97	305700/77/88 305899 302044	FESTVALADOLID@SEMINCI.COM WWW.SEMINCI.CO	
NORTHAMPTON FILM FESTIVAL				
NORTHAMPTON, MA (NOVEMBER 6-9 1997)	6/30/97	413 586 3471	FILMFEST@NOHOFILM.ORG or WWW.NOHOFILM.ORG	
FIGUEIRA DA FOZ INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL				
LISBOA (SEPTEMBER 4 14, 1997)	7/1/97	1 812 62 31		
COLUMBUS INTERNATIONAL FILM AND VIDEO FESTIVAL				
WORTHINGTON, OHIO (OCT 21-23, 1997)	7/1/97			CHRISAWD@INFINET.COM

*Guidelines and application forms for the following festivals are on file and available for photocopying (10¢ a page) at the LIFT office. As much as we'd like to, LIFT staff cannot take the time out to fax forms to members. **Please do not ask.** If you are unable to make it into the LIFT office, you will have to call the festival directly to request an application form.

*1996 edition of the AIVF Guide to International Film & Video Festivals. An invaluable resource for planning your festival entries for the upcoming year.

critical dates & dubious deadlines

calls for submissions:



HOUSE-MATE AVAILABLE JUNE 1. If you're short 1 housemate as of June 1st, call me. I prefer places with storage space (i.e. house with basement) and need a parking spot. I am responsible and believe in fairness and getting along with people. Suzan (416) 532-0994.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT ANIMATION FESTIVAL OF OTTAWA - September 18-21
Features Student competitions, workshops, seminars, panels, Animatek Trade Fair, retrospective programs, tributes, Awards Ceremony and cash prizes. Deadline: July 1 For more info.. (613) 232 8769, email: crobinso@DocuWeb.ca, www.DocuWeb.ca/CFI-OttAniFest/

THE WTN ENDOWMENT provides 2 Canadian women with at least 5 years experience in broadcasting the opportunity to attend the Banff Centre for the Arts. One endowment will be awarded to a woman working as a television technician, the second will be granted to a director for producer looking to enhance her knowledge of the technical aspects of broadcasting. DEADLINE: July 4. For more info. and an application form contact: Shirley Muir at the WTN Foundation Inc. Ph.:1 800-575-7317 Fax: 204-774-3227 Email: foundation@wtn.ca

INTERNETV is looking for shorts to program on its network, which is based in Austin and provides video-on-demand on the Web. Films should be under 5 minutes in length, and—believe it or not—you do get paid (but not that much; only \$10-\$25, but still!). For more information, either e-mail robcamp@well.com or telephone 512.459.1366.

THE HEART OF FILM INTERNATIONAL SCREENPLAY COMPETITION is now accepting entries for its 4th annual contest. If you've written a script which could be considered either "adult/mature" or "family/children" this is your chance to pickup \$3500 in cash, participation in the Heart of Film Mentorship Program, air, and accommodations to attend the HoF Screenwriters Conference, which runs in Austin from October 2-5. Deadline is May 15, and the winners will be announced October. For more information, call 1.800.310.FEST

DOBOY'S DOZENS "DA' MOVIES" FILMMAKERS' SHOWCASE is looking for shorts 30 minutes or less for future showcases. This LA-based program was launched in 1994 to strong critical response, and offers attendees bean-bag chairs and pastries. For more information, call 213.293.6514.

DEEP WEB CREATIVE PROJECTS - The Banff Centre is currently accepting proposals for creative projects that explore various applications of the World Wide Web — artistic, educational, publishing, entertainment, marketing or the Web as a component of a larger multimedia environment such as CD-ROM, interactive video or virtual reality. Banff will offer artists and producers opportunities to work with Virtual Reality Markup Language, Hyper Text Mark-Up Language, dynamic media and emerging World Wide Web Software. They will also commission Web sites as part of the Deep Web project — a two year Web creation and software development project which offers creation and technical opportunities to Canadian and international artists, designers, production companies and technicians. APPLICATION DEADLINE is July 15. Project duration will be determined by the parameters of individual proposals.

Contact: The Banff Centre for the Arts, Media and Visual Arts, Box 1020, Station 8, Banff, Alberta T0L 0C0 Email: arts_info@banffcentre.ab.ca web site: www.nmv.banffcentre.ab.ca

funding & grant deadlines:

ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL (961-1660)
Artists' Film and Video

October 1
Electronic Media
September 15
Visual Artists (\$5000)
September 15
Visual Artists (\$10 000)
August 15

NFB FILMMAKER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (FAP) (973-3012)
April 30

TORONTO ARTS COUNCIL (392-6800)
Visual Arts (Inclusive of Film & Video)
October 15

CANADA COUNCIL
(1-800-263-5588)

FUND (FOUNDATION TO UNDERWRITE NEW DRAMA FOR PAY TELEVISION) (956-5431)
Script Development and Equity Investment Programmes
May 2

CANADA TELEVISION AND CABLE PRODUCTION FUND-EQUITY INVESTMENT PROGRAM (514) 283-6363
started September 9, 1996

ROGERS DOCUMENTARY FUND
Robin Mirsky, 864-2325
Core Funding
April 7
Top-Up Funding
June 3, October 1

MACLEAN HUNTER/COGECO FUND (596-5878)
Maclean Television Fund
August 1 Nov. 1, Feb. 15, 1998
Cogeco Program Development Fund
July 15, February 1 1998

lift news...lift news...lift n

new members:

Welcome new members
as of FEBURARY 97:

Daphne Bailie
Chris Beale
Andrew Burrows
Donna Chan
Robert B. Cowan
Loretta De Stefano
Victor Di Risio
Mark Doty
Ted Endean
Kevin Garcia
Warren Gordon
Brian Gray
Sid Katz
Benjamin Kukkee
Cynthia Lickers
Kurt Mac William
Ron Morgan
Daniel O'connor
Colina Phillips
Jay Rao
Jesse Rosensweet
Jai Sarin
Elisa Suppa
Robert Swan
Shawn Venasse
Ramona Wall

congratulations:

Siobhan Devine had a baby girl! Jemima Raffe Devine.

lift orientation:

There will be an orientation session for individuals who are thinking about joining LIFT and members who haven't yet familiarized themselves with the co-op's facilities and resources. Orientation Dates: Wednesday, April 23, Wednesday, May 21 Wednesday, June 18, Wednesday, July 23. 11:30 am to 1 pm.

announcements:

LIFT MEMBERS' DIRECTORY Production of the Members' Directory is starting. LIFT members are asked to inform Deanna of any changes to their address, crew list, or directory listing. It is members' responsibility to inform us if they want to be published in the directory. Otherwise, their names will not be included. DEADLINE: May 1

APRIL 30, 1997 is the deadline for LIFT members to upgrade to Associate, and/or get their membership in good standing if they want to be eligible for LIFT's 1997 Production Grants.

NEWS FLASH RE: LOCATION FILMING!:

Filming at the LIFT building. If you want to film immediately outside the LIFT office, or in the building, you need to make all arrangements through LIFT. If you do not, you will be prosecuted. This comes after some LIFT members who shall remain nameless offended other tenants of the building by inconsiderate location practices... The landlords are pissed.

Filming anywhere in the warehouse district. All the properties in the LIFT area are privately owned. Permission must be obtained from the building owners to film at the location. **IF YOU DO NOT HAVE PERMISSION YOU WILL BE PROSECUTED.**

Filming on the railway lands. **IT IS A FEDERAL OFFENCE!** You cannot beg your way out by telling the CN Police that you are a) a student or b) a LIFT member. Recently, a railway policeperson pulled his pistol on an offending filmmaker... Just so you know...

MAY 22 - 25th -- Asian Heritage Month

MAY 23 - June 2 Inside Out Lesbian & Gay Film and Video Festival

JUNE — the Desh Pardesh Festival takes place June 11th - 15th this year.

Asian Heritage Month is See their flyer this issue.

ews...lift news...lift news...

liftgear & machinations:

What's new with equipment @ LIFT?

PROTOOLS NEWS:

NEW S-VHS Video Deck in ProTools Suite! The top-loading 3/4" has been replaced by a shiny brand new JVC BR-5800U SVHS deck. So, if you're making a video transfer of your film for your ProTools session, make sure it's either VHS or SVHS. We can still make window dubs to VHS here at LIFT

LEARN PROTOOLS FOR FREE!

LIFT is still offering Free ProTools hours on **Tuesdays: 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., 1 p.m. - 4 p.m., 4 p.m. - 6 p.m.**

Although these hours are free, if you don't show up and you don't give 48 hours cancellation notice, you will be charged for the time!

The ProTools system has been sick resulting in some computer crashes. We called in the computer Doctor, who installed a new version of the software, and it is now back in good health.

TITLE CRAWLS MADE EASY AT LIFT

Automation takes LIFT by storm. The rails on the Oxberry animation stand are being automated by Level Seven Technologies allowing you to quickly and easily make a title crawl. We hope to have this automation complete by mid-May.

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN TEACHING A SHOPTALK AT LIFT?

LIFT holds three or four Shoptalk Series' every year, on a wide variety of film related topics, taught primarily by LIFT members. If you have an idea for a Shoptalk, or would be interested in teaching one let us know. Many members fulfill their annual volunteer hours by instructing these workshops. Submit a detailed written outline along with a copy of your resume to the LIFT office. (Our fax number is 588-7017) Submission of a proposal does not guarantee that the workshop will take place.

shoptalk:

At deadline time, spaces still remained in the following Shoptalks:

DOCUMENTARY FILMMAKING with Lara Fitzgerald, May 1 & 8, 6:30 p.m. - 10 p.m.

CONTINUITY with Jane Walker, May 10, noon - 5 p.m.

BL-16 CAMERA with Mara Ravins, May 17, noon - 5 p.m.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR FIRST MOVIE (FROM SOMEONE WHO JUST DID) with Carolynne Hew, May 22, 7 - 10 p.m.

ALL THE TECHNICAL DETAILS YOU NEED TO KNOW (BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK) with Jeff Sterne, May 27, 6 - 10 p.m.

HOW TO SCORE YOUR FILM with Philip Stanger, May 29, 7 p.m. - 10 p.m.

THE CAMERA ASSISTANT with Deborah Tabah, June 7, 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.

Call **LIFT at 588-6444** to find out if spaces are still available
You can register in person or by mail

more announcements:

YEAH.. PHOTOS ARE COMING IN!!!

For the **LIFT year book in June, '97** Send in your picture, or any visual representation of yourself. Those who don't will languish forever in obscurity. You have been warned! As of now, we have received a few pictures, but we feel it is not enough yet to be a representative sample. What are you waiting for?

other people's money....



Reflections on the Images Film Festival panel "My Lies and Your Truths"...

Participants: Sarah Lightbody (Images)/Vera Frenkel (Spotlight Artist/ Diana Newen (Under the Skin Game)/David Gatten (Hardwood Process)/Martha Colburn (I'm Gonna, Hey Tiger)/Jeff Kulik (Heavy Metal Parking Lot). Moderator:Dot Tuer

The topic: It started with a discussion about thematic trends in work: memory, fragments, biography, mass culture... From there it somehow segued into a discussion of money: Where is it these days? How public is it, and how private are your ideas? The points raised were all the ones facing the cultural community today, and the dialogue became heated at points as the status quo philosophy of publicly funded art was challenged by invasive conservative political thinking.

The following are snippets (fragments, recalled from memory...), culled from ideas forwarded by all of the above, V-Tape's Lisa Steele, the Canada Council's Karen Tisch and a variety of other vocal participants in the debate:

The current political revisionism, is fuelling rhetoric that endangers arts funding. It is becoming more acceptable to consider publicly funded art non-art, even when funded through arms-length institutions with peer-review granting procedures. Real art, the new mythology goes, is for the masses, and Canadian art today is problematic in that it has been made without consideration for the audience, in an elitist framework, causing Canadians to hate art as they feel alienated from it, so they feel that public money shouldn't be spent on it. "Grant fat" is a term coined to describe a fictitious situation in which artists are producing incomprehensible work while living off massive grants and buying houses.

Counter argument #1: We are the public! It is our money! Who is to say that our vote is less important, that our desire to designate funds towards cultural investigation — traditionally considered a search for meaning and context and voice — is an unworthy objective, whatever the results of that exploration turn out to be?

Counter argument #2: Grants are not that large, and living off grants is an insecure lifestyle.

One artist in the audience considered that any form of patronage is slavery, that even the peer-review process can be compromised, and that to work unfettered by the dictates of either state or corporate funding is art's true ideal. "You've been seduced," Vera Frenkel said, voicing Counter Argument #3: Those who maintain that art is purely for mass enjoyment and apply an economic scale of value to it are those who perceive art-as-trophy rather than art as a process of becoming. They are afraid of heterogeneity, diversity and challenges to the status quo. Public money should be spent on art, period. We are not asking hospitals to go looking for private sponsorship, private patronage. (Aren't we?)

Filmmaker David Gatten told us a scary story: Charlotte, North Carolina, produced *Angels in America*, the gay content of which offended local politicians. Another theatre produced *8 Degrees of Separation*, with one gay character. So offended was the city council that they pulled the entire arts budget of \$2.5 million.

Whatever your feelings, this is a critical debate: the effects of conservative thinking are being reflected in cultural cutbacks. Final words from Ms Frenkel: It's all about surviving in a toxic environment.

BJM

message from the new and improved Board of Directors, with jonathon culp

Let's get down to business. The Board of Directors now has a complete executive! Drum roll please:

Chair: David Nancoff
Vice-Chair: Christy Garland
Treasurer: Simone Jones
Secretary: Jonathan Culp

These are the people — along with the rest of the Board, of course — who are to be held accountable to you member types. Or else we are the puppets of the LIFT aristocracy; these things are hard to suss from the inside. Feedback — We want FEEDBACK.

On February 24, select Board members entertained David Poole from the august Canada Council. Mr. Poole inspected the troops and bore witness to some recent LIFT works of art. By all accounts the rendezvous fulfilled all manner of diplomatic and ulterior motives. Dunno — wasn't there.

On to the exciting, practical stuff LIFT has introduced some dazzling new block-booking policies. The Oxberry room — where quantum frame math and adjusting focus with your toes can play havoc with conventional notions of time and space — will now be block-bookable at the rate of \$48.00 a day for full members, \$96.00 a day for associate members, up to a maximum of four consecutive. And in the continuing saga of the sunny piece of real estate known as the Mezzanine, block-booking rates have been set at \$200/\$400 a week for full/associate members. Both of these rates follow the 40%-of-real-hourly-value formula set by editing room block-booking policy, and are not arbitrary at all! The technical coordinators are the friends of the people! (But they will fine your ass if you don't show up for your ProTools practice time, so don't cross 'em).

I have also heard rumblings that our mysterious multiuse space downstairs may soon find its mandate. Stay tuned for more equipment advisory meetings to put in your two cents...

Now. As the Board finds itself surrounded by the sound of crunching num-



bers, we have begun a discussion of preparation for the further falling off axes from el loco cucaracha at Queen's Park. An abstract assurance will suffice: LIFT is in very good financial shape, and our very sane strategy of being prepared for the worst is bearing dividends. We are becoming more self-sufficient, generating more revenue without unduly victimizing our hungry membership. But, like all indigenous arts in this occupied country, we are grant-bearing beasts, and as the Uncommonwealth grows, we will have to face some hard questions. We have to ask where our priorities lie, as artists and citizens. We have to evaluate our position as a member-run, co-operative group of artists, recognize our alliances and make common cause. In a country and a world where commerce and every honest notion of social value are clearly and thoroughly polarized whether we like it or not, we must ask: on which side of the pole do we choose to stand? And then we have to figure out what to do about it. A job for the Board of Directors? Hardly.

All of which brings me to one last bit of business, in which the board agreed to provide services in kind to Allyson Mitchell and Jane Farrow's '3 Minute Rock Star' project. I was attending a Vineland Station Easter hootenanny when this collection of super-cheap first-films was screened at the 360, so I didn't get to witness it first hand. But the concept of effective Canadian filmmaking as a series of tiny explosions rather than the dragging belly of a typical Telefilm walrus is one precise strategy to revitalize our community as a force for change at a time when change is all. On the board, we engaged in some valid debate over whether making an allowance for this project (and thus joining fellow community sponsors Pleasuredome, Images and the Lesbian & Gay Community Appeal) would open up the floodgates for more such requests. All the better, in my opinion. To paraphrase Che Guevara, let there be two, three, many '3 Minute Rock Stars!'

Thanks to David Nancoff for encouraging these reflections.



Letters from Home, Mike Hoolboom

Hot Docs /review Jane Farrow

Hot Docs '97 was the source of good and bad news for independent documentary makers. First the good - with more specialty channels going to air this fall, there is an increased number of broadcasters and buyers looking for independently produced documentary programming. And now the bad - the labour of love documentary bristling with creative genius, innovation and unapologetic political analysis is an increasingly endangered species.

According to people like Daniel Cross, director of the People's Choice award-winning *The Street: A Film With the Homeless*, it is becoming almost impossible to start and finish one of these enduring works of beauty and insight given the on going decimation of arts funding and key institutional support such as the NFB PAFPS program. In 1997 the self-starting auteur with a vision is therefore faced with all time bad odds when embarking on an obsessive quest for truth.

Despite this, it seems that there will always be these keeners like Cross and his cinematographer/associate director Richard Boyce because there will always be stories that the mainstream misses. It is these mavericks like LIFT members Heather Frise and Velcrow Ripper (*Bones of the Forest*, Hot Docs Best of the Fest '96) Ali Kazimi (*Narmada: A Valley Rises*) and Roberto Ariganello (*Loteria*, nominated this year for Best Short) with a desire to tell the story, whatever the odds, whatever the potential financial fall-out. Creative freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose.

It became evident at the Hot Docs panels that there exists a potential for conflict between these new filmmakers and the more established tier of independent documentary makers. The upstarts are eyed with a combination of excitement from the network producers who want to buy well-researched and creatively presented material at rock bottom prices, and envy and suspicion by the more established documentarians who can no longer produce work by scamming, begging and bartering and don't appreciate being undercut at the marketplace. It's a rock and a hard place that will continue to figure in the ongoing negotiation between buyers and sellers in the burgeoning multi-channel, multi-media marketplace.

Producers from Discovery, The History and Entertainment Network, CBC Newsworld, BRAVO, WTN and TVO repeatedly stated that they wanted to be pitched documentary ideas with a full blown creative vision and a strong narrative element. It seems that the gatekeepers of tv programming were at least tentatively eager to break

down some of the more stagnant conventions of documentary filmmaking including the sacred cow of objectivity. 'Quirky' was the buzz-word of the industry-oriented fest - an adjective used to describe documentaries that took new or unusual routes through old or uncharted territory. Another broadcaster referred to 'self-referencing' work that openly acknowledges it's subjectivity and point of view. In any case, they all said they wanted it, although it remains to be seen how much they'll pay in pre-buys for a great story on the Raging Grannies told from the perspective of a widowed Winnebago driver out for a good time road trip and some mischevious grass-roots activism.

And what about the rather longish awards ceremonies with so many categories - Under 60 minutes, Over 60 minutes, Best Feature, Best Social Issue, Best Political, Best International by a Broadcaster etc., etc. Is it really a good idea to give out 25 separate awards or does this just water down the importance of getting one?

Sorry folks, there ain't no simple answer. It does dilute the glamour and gloss of receiving a steering wheel shaped statuette from Canada's only documentary festival and awards ceremony, however having more categories serves to level the playing field.

In 1993 when the Hot Docs categories did not recognize the difference between expensive broadcast-commissioned works and the vastly underfunded independent works, the ceremonies were derided as nothing short of a CBC-awards banquet.

Still, by creating more awards categories the festival effectively shies away from defining what a documentary is and is not. To some people, Hot Docs is virtually indistinguishable from a tv festival with segments

produced for shows like CBC's Witness, The National or TVO's Journey's competing for awards. This may be sheer possessiveness and sour grapes on their part, after all, the multi-media, hyper-hybridized 90's isn't exactly a place to get stuck on technical definitions. And let's not forget Hot Docs added an experimental short category this year which LIFT member Mike Hoolboom snagged with his stunning work *Letters from Home*.

At this point in the evolution of Canadian documentary making, it seems like an entirely acceptable compromise that Hot Docs be a little category-dense in order to ensure that apples are not competing against oranges.



still from: *Loteria*, Roberto Ariganello and Frederico Hidalgo

Interview with John Walker by Jeff Winch



JOHN WALKER'S DIRECTING/PRODUCING CREDITS:

*UTSHIMASSITS -PLACE OF
THE BOSS.*
1996,
TOUGH ASSIGNMENT.
1996,
HIDDEN CHILDREN.
1994,
ORPHANS OF MANCHURIA.
1993,
SHEPHERDS TO THE FLOCK.
1992,
DISTRESS SIGNALS.
1991,
*LENINGRAD (from The Hand
of Stalin trilogy).*
1990,
*STRAND - UNDER THE DARK
CLOTH.*
1989,
*A WINTER TAN (co-direc-
tor/co-producer).*
1987,
*CHAMBERS - TRACKS AND
GESTURES.*
1981.

John Walker is one of Canada's foremost documentary filmmakers. In the 16 years since the release of his first film he has created an impressive body of work which has received international acclaim. The list of awards and nominations he has earned over the years is already long and continues to grow with his latest Gemini for *Utshimassits - Place of the Boss*.

His film *Tough Assignment* will be screening on May 1st with Roberta Pazdro's *Choking on Icy Water* at DELUXE, 424 Adelaide East in Theatre 6. This screening is presented by the Canadian Independent Film Caucus (CIFC) and is free to LIFT members.

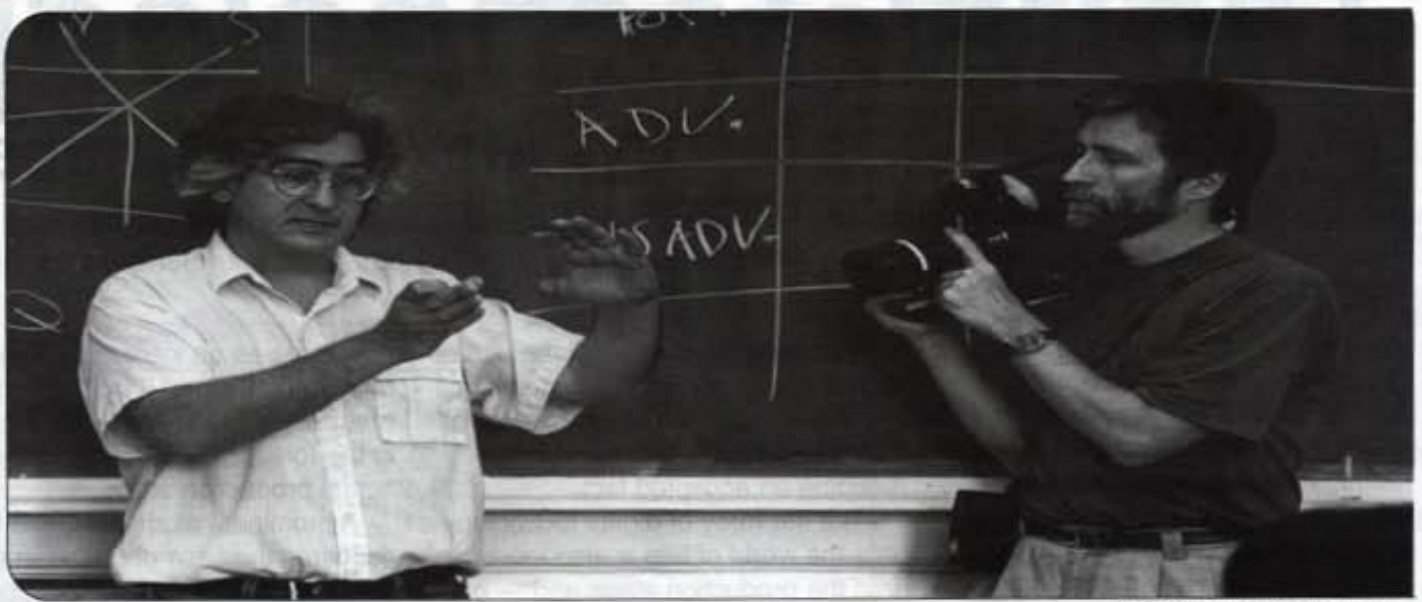
How did you get involved in film-making?

My background is in photography. I was photographing when I was quite young. In high school I had friends in University studying film and because I had an eye for shooting I ended up doing their cinematography, Super 8 and regular 8 films inspired by Arthur Lipsett, very experimental kind of stuff. Then I ended up doing some cinematography for Crawley films in Ottawa.. so for a number of years my main focus was cinematography but I was also learning the craft of filmmaking. I didn't want a career as a cinematographer and I knew I wanted to make films so I spent a lot of time in the editing room.

Hanging around the cutting room is my main advice to anyone who wants to learn the craft of filmmaking. The cutting room is where films get put together and you see where the problems are. It certainly improved my cinematography.

In 1980 I started on a film *Chambers - Tracks and Gestures* about the Canadian artist Jack Chambers. That was my first film as a director, a one hour documentary. I just dove in head first. It was an independent film co-produced with Chris Lowry and Atlantis films. Atlantis had just made their first short drama and this was their first arts documentary. I had complete freedom with it. Michael MacMillan was very supportive... although there were all kinds of arguments and stuff. But there inevitably are, and that's healthy because you're fighting for your artistic vision. That's something important and you have to fight for it.

Chambers won all kinds of awards and really set me off. I shot it, directed it and Sally Patterson edited. I worked with a writer, Seaton Findlay, a friend of mine who had worked many years in Ottawa at



Walker in workshop

Crawley films, a very good writer and filmmaker. I learned a lot from him. He helped me in the cutting room with the writing of the film. So, I had a lot of help.

I think what's important when you're starting out is to listen to others for guidance. Listening is one of the most critical skills you develop, and there's intuitive skills in terms of what to shoot and what not to shoot. It's sort of like trying to write a poem in a way, you don't just sit down and write it, it's a process. The best documentary films are the ones that don't explain everything. They are stimulating feelings and ideas, it's about life as it's being lived. I think a lot of people who make documentaries come at it with a very pragmatic point of view, they're not looking at it from a poetic point of view at all. That's why they are so boring.

As a cinematographer I've worked with a lot of first time directors, and in my experience, there's a tendency for younger directors to direct everybody, tell everybody what to do. It should be quite the opposite. A director of documentary has *not* to direct people but in fact draw out the best in everyone. Whether it's your

subjects that you're trying to draw out, or your cinematographer, or your editor.. you want the best and you want to allow that creative process to happen. It just isn't a dictatorship.

As a filmmaker I think you have to go through an apprenticeship where you're making films. You can make industrial films or a film that's presenting a sponsor's point of view, but you're still learning about filmmaking. You can approach anything creatively.

The Strand film is a good example of a film that became richer the more time I spent on it. The Canada Council and the Ontario Arts Council were critical. They put up the first money which allowed me to do some really important research. I ended up filming an interview with Georgia O'Keeffe, the painter, which was important in developing other support for the film. I did another interview with Strand's second wife, that was also important because she died 6 months later. If I hadn't had

that Council money I would have missed that.

What's important for a documentary filmmaker is to have passion for a subject. Like Paul Strand said "you have to have something to say about the world." So be passionate, have something to say and maintain that vision at all costs. Don't allow whoever it is that you're working with to distort that vision, that passion, with their own needs. Compromise is part of the process, but there are ways to compromise creatively in terms of budget and in terms of the audience you're trying to reach, and still maintain your vision, your passion and the story you're trying to tell. With the Strand film it was definitely my passion and commitment to making that film that allowed me to convince people who at first said "no". Then they came around and eventually said "yes".

I usually try to talk myself out of everything I'm about to make, "I can't do this, it's not possible" you know? Really, what I'm doing is making sure I'm committed to it, testing myself. And I continue to test myself in the field too, always saying "don't think it's good enough". Always challenging my own notions of what it is I think I'm doing.

Digital Technology

by: Alexander Shuper

The history of cinema is just as much the history of technology as it is the history of art. The two are inextricably linked as significant artistic achievements have traditionally been made with successive advances in film technology.

One of these advances was the advent of video — a corollary chapter in the history of the artistic and technological evolution of motion pictures. Video has expanded the world of moving imagery substantially, although it does remain a tool primarily relegated to experimental, industrial, and broadcast domains.

This is in strong contrast to the effect of a newer, far more profound — but still related — technology which is infusing itself into all aspects and all realms of the modern movie-making process. This new technology is, of course, digital technology.

In essence, digital technology refers to a system by which information is reduced to binary representation; this in turn allows for efficient and effective storage, transfer, and manipulation of that information. It is the basic concept and principle behind the computer. Therefore, to survey the implications of digital technology upon the craft of movie-making, one only has to consider how computers are used in the film production process.

The most obvious examples pertain to pre-production and post-production. In pre-production, for example, computers have for years been used in writing and formatting scripts, in budgeting, scheduling,

and so forth. Furthermore, the use of digital non-linear editing systems in the post-production stage has, for all intents and purposes, by now become an accepted fact.

But the foray of digital technology into the world of film is also moving into the production stage and — perhaps more shockingly — into the distribution phase as well.

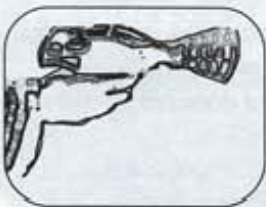
In terms of production (that is, actual shooting), digital technology is making itself felt in the form of new DV (digital video) cameras. DV cameras are already available in numerous formats (Standard DV, DVC, DV Pro, Digital Beta Cam., etc.) and each offers significantly better and more controllable images than conventional video.

Shooting on conventional video has always been an option for the filmmaker, but the biggest drawback has always been image quality. Traditionally, nothing has compared to the image of pure film. But if the rate at which DV technology is advancing continues, the day may not be far when it truly challenges film's rank as the professional standard. Some digital Beta cameras already offer the option of 'film-look', a simple switch on the camera that, when tripped, records an image frighteningly close to a real film image. We should not then be sur-

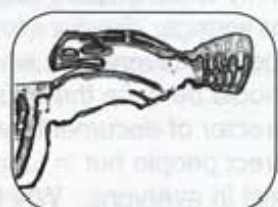
prised to see an increasing trend for independent films — both shorts and features — to use digital technology in the form of DV cameras in the actual production stage.

A prominent example of this trend concerns the case of Oklahoma Theatre Productions, a production company based in Washington, DC, that is currently shooting a feature-length drama (tentatively titled *Carrots and Onions*) entirely on DV. Robert Nolty, the company's co-founder, has recently defended his choice of working digitally in *Videomaker* magazine. He states: "Past low-budget movies spent most of their money on film stock, developing, and rented post-production facilities. Most of our money will go into hardware, which will still be available for making future movies. We are undertaking this endeavor as a 'proof-of-concept' that the technology exists to allow everyone to make their own high-quality production movies ... We want to show that these technologies are accessible at prices the average citizen with a passion for the medium can afford."

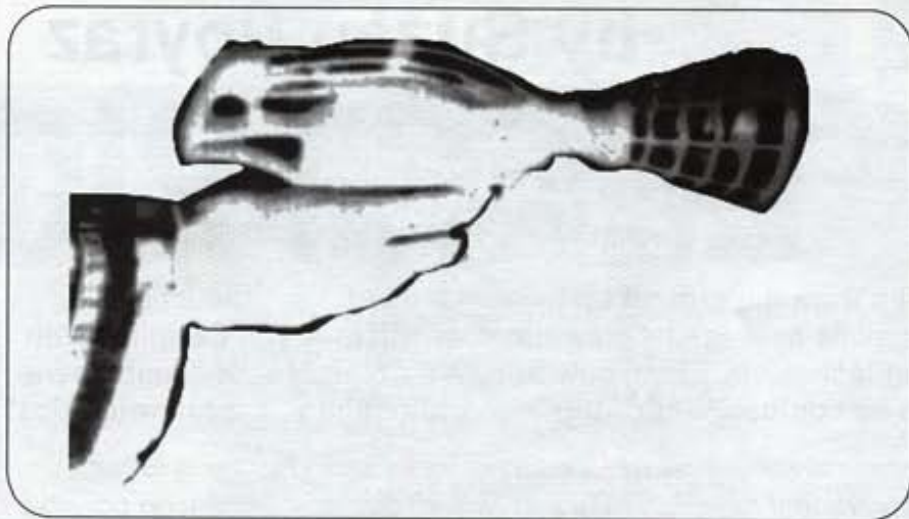
Of course this is just one example among many of a production taking an all digital root. What makes this case truly unique is that Oklahoma Theatre Productions is on the vanguard of using digital technology in *all* the stages of their production,



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And Filmmaking



right up to distribution. Once their film is edited (which will be done digitally, of course), Oklahoma Productions plans to make *Carrots and Onions* the first feature film ever released on the Internet. Nolt explains: "After post-production, we will maintain the all-digital life cycle by premiering the movie on the Internet .. and afterwards seek to exhibit it at film and video festivals and possibly seek wider distribution."

Naturally, there are technological problems that must still be hamstruck before the Internet can truly become a viable vehicle of film distribution (mostly pertaining to information throughput rates), but solutions to these technical obstacles are in the works. Let us not forget that just a few years ago, similar obstacles existed for digital editing, and most have been dealt with, if not solved completely.

Therefore, the case of Oklahoma Theatre Productions stands as a

case in point of how digital technology is now infiltrating all stages of the filmmaking process. New digital alternatives exist for both the production phase (in terms of DV cameras) as well as the distribution phase (in terms of the Internet).

Interestingly, the Internet is also on the verge of further revolutionizing the post production phase, beyond the point that digital technology has already revolutionized the editing process. In effect, as digital non-linear systems are poised to become the new standard for editing, the Internet is concurrently expanding, answering to market and intellectual demands in the populace. Both the Internet and non-linear computer editing systems are based on digital technologies (that is, both store information as binary codes). In effect, the World Wide Web now features many sound effects and stock footage libraries, set up expressly for those in the film business.

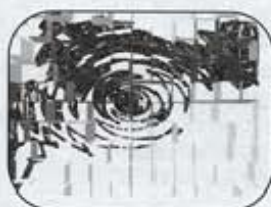
At this time, most of these libraries only contain inventories of available material with a few sample clips, but some also contain downloadable files. In the next few years, extensive stores of audio and visual material will be available to editors with a few simple mouse clicks and cursory keystrokes. Without even leaving the editing console, an editor will be able to log onto the web, search for and download any sound effects, music, or even footage that he or she may require.

The trend, then, is obvious: digital technology continues to change and re-define the filmmaking process. For the film purist, it may seem that we are losing something to this encroachment of the cold, binary, digital world into the time-tested and true techniques of traditional film craft. But we should not dismiss the advantages of the digital world, which include higher production quality with greater ease, affordability, and access.

The word *technology* comes from the latin root *technos*, which means tool, and we should bear this in mind when we evaluate the implications of digital technology upon film and filmmaking. After all, if we accept digital technology as a tool — a new tool which expands the current chemical, electronic, and mechanical nature of film — we will be that much closer to the new artistic achievements that have traditionally been induced by the introduction of new technologies — of new tools — into our craft.



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HOW TO BE A GOOD DAILY ELECTRIC

by Suzan Poyraz

If you intend to learn lighting for film from the ground up by working in large productions or have decided that freelancing your skills as a casual crew member will give you flexibility with your time (in this case, as a lighting technician, commonly known as "electric" or "lamp operator", lovingly called "spark", not to be confused with "grip"), pay attention to the following tips!

Warning: *This is not an article on technical know-how required from an electric. Its aim is to help those interested in "daily" work in any department integrate themselves with the least frustration possible into tightly structured authoritarian-style Hollywood film productions that consist of highly differentiated and specialized functions.*

GET THE CALL INFORMATION

STRAIGHT:

This includes call time and address of set (sometimes instructions on how to get there), parking availability, whether it is an interior or exterior shoot, whom you will report to, telephone number of production office in case you have additional questions or get lost on the way.

BE PREPARED FOR EVERYTHING:

The bag you take to work, in addition to your toolbelt and gloves should include rainboots (or other water-proof footwear), rain jacket and pants, water-proof work gloves; winter underwear (if you are not already wearing it, take it with you in case the day includes both interior and exterior locations), extra socks and shirt, at least one extra layer for warmth (wool or latest high-tech fabric sweater or vest), warm head wear and something to cover your neck and mouth, heavy winter gloves, "hot shots"; sunglasses, sun screen, lip balm and insect repellent.

It is handy to keep in a separate bag items you can take with you if you are assigned "sky duty" (elevated or telescoping platform, crane, top of a scaffolding or building) or are asked to guard a light far from set. This bag could include extra layers of clothes (you become colder when you are stationary), thermos, bottle of water, an apple or cookie, something to read (not too engrossing though), small pillow or your choice of comfort items. Some dailies bring their own electric heater with them. I would advise against a Walkman.

In summer jobs you can of course eliminate the winter gear from your package but don't overdo it; summer nights can become very cold or you could end up working in a damp, cold basement.

Don't go to any job without a flashlight, it will prove to be one of your most important aids. Any flashlight you can carry on your belt will do the job, however my preference is a headlamp because it leaves both of my hands free. Holding a flashlight in your mouth becomes a very unpleasant experience in cold weather.

For calls that require safety boots or helmets, find out if the production will provide them or if you have to bring your own.

GET CERTIFICATION FOR USING ELEVATED AND TELESCOPING PLATFORMS:

because a daily electric will often be given this job. There are a couple of companies that offer courses. (Note: if you are under 25 and are requested to drive a rented production vehicle, please inform the production office of your age.)

ARRIVE EARLY:

At least fifteen minutes, better still half an hour will give you enough time to do many of the things to be mentioned below, even have

a quick "breakfast" at the craft service truck. Remember, the moment call time arrives you should be ready with your belt and gloves (and if provided with one, walkie-talkie) already on.

INTRODUCE YOURSELF:

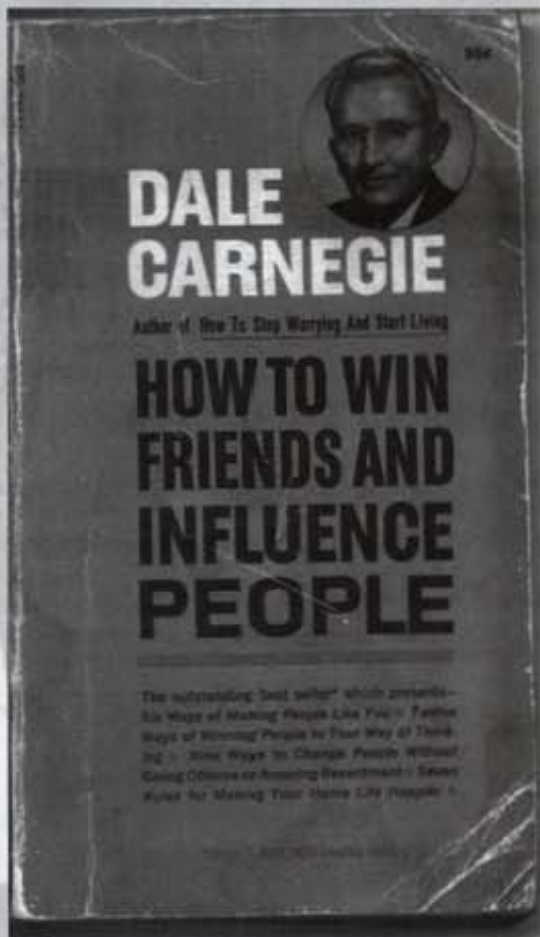
Find the lighting truck, or if in studio the lighting "office" and report to the second electric ("best boy"). The second electric is your direct supervisor, he or she will assign you your duties.

It is not imperative that you introduce yourself to the gaffer immediately; rather, wait for a convenient moment.

In addition to the other electrics and generator operator, say hello to the grips; you will be working together, therefore you should acknowledge them. Again, it is very wise to introduce yourself to the second grip— support from grips is essential for a safe and pleasant workplace.

Do not introduce yourself to the director of photography (D.O.P) unless he or she initiates it.

As soon as possible, try to find out who the first, second and third assistant directors (A.D.'s), and location personnel are. There's no need to introduce yourself (the third A.D. will eventually come and ask you for your name), visual recognition is enough. Throughout the work day, try to keep an awareness of where the nearest A.D. and



location assistant is; there are many instances where you will need their help.

Exchange greetings with the sound department too, as you will be frequently crossing lines (literally).

It is good practise to nod hello or good morning to all set personnel. When they return your greeting, even if you've never worked with these people before, you'll suddenly feel part of the team and consequently more relaxed.

EQUIPMENT SPOTTING:

Please try to do this before the work day starts. It consists of a quick visual check of what's where on the truck or equipment room, what's in individual bins (stands, cable, lights etc) and the "ditty" cart. If the set is already established, go to what is known as the staging area(s). Visually memorize what's already there. You will be much loved if at all times during the work day you know where the next piece of 25' or 50' 10/3 cable ("AC", "stinger" etc.), 25' or 50' 6/3 cable ("Joy", "5K cable" etc.) and 4-way box ("Die" etc.) is,

wherever on the set you may be. This principle extends to other equipment also. You might for example notice a 5K lamp or a 2K dimmer in a strange place. It could be there for a reason or by accident. But if the gaffer calls for a 2K dimmer and the crew is having a hard time locating it and you remember having seen it earlier, you will gain instant popularity. Train your eyes and mind to know where things are.

DO A CABLE WALK:

if you are called to a set that's pre-lit or where shooting has already begun. It is best that you do this before your start; together with "equipment spotting", it will give you most of the information you need about this set as a daily electric. Start from the power source(s) — generator, tie-in or other — follow the various cable runs, locate distribution boxes, get an idea of which lights are powered from where. So, the first time someone asks you for power, you won't start running around like a chicken without a head.

IF AND WHEN YOU HAVEN'T BEEN GIVE A SPECIFIC DUTY, PAIR UP

WITH ONE OF THE REGULARS:

(There is no need to stay with the same person, try to figure out who you could help best at different times). This is essential if you don't have a walkie-talkie, but even if you do, remember that electricians usually work better in pairs, with the added advantage of one being ready to cover for the other for bathroom needs, smoke break etc. While you're together you can also question the regular electric about concerns particular to that set.

DON'T WANDER AWAY FROM SET OR YOUR ASSIGNED POSITION WITHOUT INFORMING AT LEAST ONE PERSON IN YOUR DEPARTMENT.

LEARN TO NOTICE WHAT IS RELEVANT TO YOUR WORK:

In addition to direct requests from gaffer, second electric or other co-worker, here are some of your clues: Everything the first A.D. says out loud (especially "turning around" and "checking the gate", "moving on", "second team!"); D.O.P. and gaffer conversing and pointing to a particular light; the D.O.P. pulling out his or her exposure meter; a co-worker hurrying toward truck; gaffer or the D.O.P. walking toward a light stand (he/she probably wants a change in a hurry - offer help but don't wrestle the light away); a co-worker climbing a ladder; a co-worker approaching a large light (any light on a crank-up stand or cinevator should be moved by at least two people, or three if there is a ballast or cable to be spotted); appliances requiring electrical power, such as fans and fog machines being brought to set; a general mass movement of crew from other departments; D.O.P. or camera operator or first A.D. pointing at cable or electrical equipment (it's probably in the shot). You'll notice that a lot of pointing takes place, if not, look in the direction your superiors are looking.

Whatever you're doing, periodically check to see where the D.O.P. and gaffer are.

Even if you're on "sky-duty" don't tune out and get too wrapped up in a book etc. Try to keep an awareness of what's going on, that way if you're suddenly called on the walkie-talkie you won't be disoriented because the set has moved somewhere else while you weren't paying attention!

KEEP CHATTER ON SET TO A MINIMUM:

You won't be able to fulfill the above condi-

HOW TO BE A GOOD DAILY ELECTRIC cont....

tion if you talk too much. Also, as you've probably noticed, workers in authoritarian structures (such as Hollywood-style film sets) are expected to listen and not talk. Even if your boss talks incessantly, this is not an open invitation for you to do the same; (s)he is in a privileged position.

HAVING SAID THE ABOVE, DON'T BE AFRAID TO ASK QUESTIONS:

If you're not sure about something or didn't understand a request the first time, ask or ask again. The embarrassment of not knowing something is none or minimal (remember as a "daily" you're not expected to know everything), but doing something incorrectly can cost aggravation, time, money and injury. Nonetheless if you make a mistake when you thought you were doing something properly, own up and apologize. Never try to pass on the blame, it will ruin your reputation and no one will believe you again. If you really think you've been unfairly accused of something significant, at a quiet time, preferably end of the day, explain honestly what happened to gaffer or second electric without sounding vindictive.

LEARN PROPER OPERATION OF WALKIE-TALKIES AND RELEVANT JARGON & PROTOCOL:

Remember this sequence: PRESS-TALK-RELEASE. Don't waste air-time, learn to be precise and concise. Ask for repetition of unclear or cut-off transmissions. Take a spare battery with you for "sky-duties".

MAKE SURE THAT THE D.O.P. (AND IN MOST CASES, THE GAFFER) IS NEVER LEFT ALONE ON SET:

There normally is a protocol to ensure this doesn't happen, but it still can. If it looks like all electricians are gone, stand near the D.O.P. If the D.O.P. calls the gaffer's or second electric's name and nobody responds, be ready to jump in with a "yes what can I do." D.O.P.'s are used to this, they won't think you've forgotten your name.

DON'T BE IDLE:

You will in time find out that in addition to the main work, there is always something to do for a daily electric. Of course these tasks shouldn't distract you from work that must be done immediately. The least you can do is make sure cables are tidy and not hazardous to people working in the area. When you run

out of missions, familiarize yourself with the equipment (for example, how to get scrims in or change the bulb for different brands and sizes or lights.)

PRACTISE SAFETY:

Most stories you hear about other "bad" electricians will be regarding the dangerous things they did. Very few fools, ones that you should be wary of, will brag about this sort of stuff. You may not know the craft well; but that won't necessarily stop employers from calling you back, because they know that you will learn with practise. However if they so much as suspect you being a insurance risk (they can't get insurance for accidents if unsafe practices are involved), they'd rather not see you around again.

DON'T HESITATE TO ASK FOR HELP:

The work days are long and more than likely physically taxing. You must learn to use your energy efficiently and safely for the entire day. If you know you can't carry or move something alone (or if it is a waste of energy to do so), or even if you are not sure, ask for assistance. Your co-workers will appreciate this because it indicates that you are not a reckless person. The possible victim of your recklessness in this business is not just you— it could be anyone who happens upon your path. No "heroism" or showing-off is worth an injury to yourself or someone else.

GET ALONG WITH PEOPLE:

Don't be rude. As for co-workers, if you end up with miserable, rude or arrogant ones, use your communication and human relations skills to deal with it most effectively. Do not retaliate. You are a daily and may not be there the next day to defend your actions.

DON'T BE ARROGANT:

Don't criticise other departments openly or behind their backs. Also make no mistake, Hollywood-style filmmaking consists of highly specialised departments—just because you work closely with camera doesn't mean you're allowed to make suggestions to them.

KNOW WHAT EVERY "DAILY ELECTRIC" SHOULD KNOW:

There is a lot to learn, but try to remember

these: Don't run. Make sure all locks on stands are tightened. Know the difference between 110V and 220V. Don't plug in, turn on or turn off large lights without checking with generator operator or 2nd electric. Each set has small differences regarding grip/electric work distribution. Find out what these are and comply.

IF, BY THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY, THE SECOND ELECTRIC HASN'T MENTIONED "PAPERWORK" TO YOU YET, ASK HIM/HER ABOUT IT:

Or any other time of the day when it is obvious that there is no immediate need for your help, you can suggest that you fill out the contract ("deal memo"), time sheet etc. Make sure you know your Social Security and Health Card number.

BE FLEXIBLE:

Each gaffer and D.O.P. has a different attitude, style and set of expectations, right down to minute details of how they like the gels put on fixtures. Don't dispute these, and please don't mention the "other way" you've learned before unless the circumstance merits it. As long as it doesn't violate safety guidelines, you ought to do things the way they prefer to.

THE ABOVE BASIC PRINCIPLES SHOULD HOLD TRUE FOR MOST SETS. GOOD LUCK!

* This is not a recognised expression (I invented it).

After working in various capacities in the film and television industry, Suzan Poyraz has spent the last three years working as a lighting technician and occasional gaffer. She prefers daily work because of the time flexibility it allows her.



The Cockroach that Ate Cincinnati continued... Reply from Michael McNamara:

I just faxed this to you at LIFT I'm glad you are planning to attend the opening weekend if more people do it might just hang on for an extra week, which is the point of the following letter

So it was you that Sandi spoke with yesterday? Are you the person to complain to about the 100 bucks? If so, please add this to the newsletter.

I am trying to get the word out about my independently produced film *The Cockroach That Ate Cincinnati* which, amazingly enough, I have managed to get booked into a "legit" cinema, without having to share the revenue with a distributor. So far, other arts organizations have been generous enough to include the promotional flyers I have made in their mailings at no charge recognizing that we are self distributing. But yesterday, when a friend of mine called LIFT to see about inclusion in the LIFT mailing, she was told it would cost us a hundred bucks.... I have to say that I'm very surprised at this cash grab. A hundred bucks to include a flyer I've made for my own film in my co-op's newsletter envelope? A flyer that I have made at my own expense, and will provide pre-folded to any dimension required? A flyer I would be happy to help stuff? I've already paid my annual dues don't those dues pay for the mailing already? Will the additional weight of an 8X11 sheet of paper increase the postage by a hundred bucks? But there is even a more important issue here. A LIFT member could shoot for a week with a hundred bucks. But would anyone ever see her film? A lot of good films die at the box office for lack of promotion. Let's consider what happens to a film after it gets in the can, shall we?

The support of the co-op should be at it's very highest at this stage of a film's life. I've not only managed to get this fucker made - I've actually managed to get it into the theatre. But promotion for a film is critical if enough people don't attend the screening of the film in the first week the film will be pulled and that will be the end to any potential revenue for me the film maker. And the implications are even more serious when you consider that if no one comes to see the film, Cineplex Odeon will think twice next time they're approached to exhibit a film by a film maker who is operating outside the conventional distribution system. This kind of thinking will trickle down to any exhibitor- including the Bloor, the Paradise or the Revue. If "The Cockroach" doesn't get a paying audience in the first week it's going to be that much more difficult for LIFT members and other independent film makers to get their films seen.

Promotion and advertising is always taken off the top of the film-makers box office returns - "forcing" an exhibitor or a distributor to spend money is no problem at all it would be MY money particularly in this case. Odeon is booking the *Cockroach* for a fee which will come off the top of our revenue. My wife and some of her friends (who work for PolyGram) have volunteered to help promote the film for free, (plus the cost of materials). Neither company are taking any profit they are giving me a better deal than my co-op!

I received no council money, and used no LIFT facilities during production. I am now 60 thousand dollars in debt after making this movie. I don't want to get into any more debt releasing it. The best I can hope for with this release is to break even on the distribution costs maybe. Because I don't have a traditional distribution deal, I cannot access any Telefilm funds. Halfway into the production, the one agency that could have helped keep me out of debt, the OFDC, had its financing slashed and bank account locked up by Mike Harris. And now I'm told that I can't even count on the support of the film co-op I have been contributing money to for the last 5 years (last week was the first time I've ever actually rented any gear from the co-op my membership fees really have just been gesture of good will a desire to support the co-op's existence.)

I really can't see how anyone would LOSE if a member of a FILM

co-op wanted to include an announcement of a forthcoming FILM to her fellow

FILM co-op members in a monthly mailing that will go out with or without the inclusion of that announcement. Presumably the making and viewing of FILMS is what the FILM co-op is all about. We can all get together and have a circle jerk in a vacuum, or we can look at the bigger picture and support the promotion of one another's work. And as I said, if no one comes to see the film because no one knows about it (and getting free promotion in the conventional press is an uphill battle), all independent filmmakers will suffer. I can understand if there was some confusion because the call came from someone who works for PolyGram, and there was a misunderstanding about who was releasing the film. If so, I can get the flyers over this afternoon - pre folded. But if this is policy for all films by co-op members, it is a really stupid, short-sighted policy that flies in the face of the realities of the independent film world, and really sucks big time.

Regards, Michael McNamara

EDITOR'S REPLY:

Dear Michael:

Please be assured that this is indeed a Co-op policy that effects all filmmakers at LIFT or anyone else who wants to send out a flyer with the LIFT mailing. If you feel it needs adjusting on your behalf, your avenue is to make an appeal to the Board. I feel you raise some good points -- but there are some counter arguments which must be voiced.

We are not a profit-making enterprise (unlike Cineplex-Odeon) and are in serious jeopardy of losing funding. Our main enterprise is to help independent filmmakers get their films made at below-industry costs. The LIFT co-op stands to take a severe funding cut when the next budget hits. The newsletter -- by the way, a luxury in terms of co-op priorities is subsidized by the flyers. We include flyers up to the point where their weight puts us into the next postage bracket. We charge for the service. Yes, it is possible (and in fact true this month) that one more would put us over the top, which effectively doubles our mailout costs. We cannot afford it, and we cannot afford to displace revenue to the Co-op.

The cost of mailing out to 800 people and organizations would be around \$400.00 to you. We are offering to do it at \$100.00. That is our bargain basement rate. We charge profit-making enterprises \$150.00. It's really not a big cost, and it offsets the cost of the newsletter considerably. It's also one of the lowest rates in town, unless you are getting stuff for free, in which case, congratulations! We have offered you (as we do to all members) a free announcement in the Newsletter in our "upcoming events" section. (I think publication of this correspondence will suffice).

We do not have a corporate overhead that allows us to subsidize all individual filmmakers at the expense of the co-op, (other than the ways in which we do already -- which you say you have chosen against accepting). How would you suggest reworking LIFT policy to allow for distribution costs to members to be covered in a way which is fair and inclusive?

All the best, Barb

Letters to the editor can be sent to: Barbara_Mainguy@tvo.org or to the LIFT Office (address on masthead)



Images Film Festival or How Vera Frenkel has Complicated My Life...

This is just a brief rundown on the Festival we'll have more about the week's events in the June issue unfortunately our press deadline is today and the Festival continues until next weekend...

At press time the Images Film Festival is well underway, and it's one of the most interesting visual events taking place in Toronto. A true filmmakers festival it includes programmes like *Neurotica*, *Safe-Sex Voodoo Dolls*, *Petrie Dish Encounters*, *Urban-a-rama*, *Astro-Girls* and *Moon Milk and Zombie's*, *Sluts and Furry Girls that Bark* all made up from work ranging from 1 minute to an hour. There's a lot here to get excited about, and I've been inspired on an hourly basis since it opened four days ago.

For film theory students this year, the fest has spotlighted controversial Canadian filmmaker Vera Frenkel. Why is she controversial? According to the lengthy discussions held between those who had fled the theatre and those who find her work appealing, her work either provokes to contemplation or boredom, her message is either complicated or obtuse, her technique either challenges through repetition and engagement in the notion of fragmentation of language as a representation of natural memory or bores to tears. She was denounced to me by one filmmaker as the 'enemy' — the reason that Canadian's hate art, and as the reason that public funding is diminishing the very definition of "Grant Fat." This venom was contextualized by others as resentment towards the older generation, a need to tear down art icons turning against the 'mother' figure... A natural process.

A lot of her pieces were meant to be seen in the context of an installation; certainly not as sit-down popcorn accompaniment, even in a festival situation. Frenkel announced at the beginning of her screenings that it may happen that our attention would wander, and "I counsel you to give in to that." Taking her at her word, I wandered out of the screening room several times, struggling with my response to work that I felt compelled to try to respect, but that I appreciated more on the level of essay than of film. Her briefest, and to me most engaging work, *This is Your Messiah Speaking*, seemed only a couple of minutes too long.

stills from:
Grandpa's fingers, Lisa Hayes
Paranoid, Sue Riedi
Warm, Wrik Mead

Then, in the panel discussion that followed the last of the three spotlight screenings, Frenkel emerged as an intelligent, brief, frank, direct and articulate defender of public culture (see "Other People's Money").

The Bruce Elder extravaganza starts on Wednesday, where the "Books of the Dead" cycle will be screened in its entirety. Individual works range from 8 minutes to four-hours, and the screenings last for three days from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. One artist told me that yesterday's Vera was Bruce Elder, the grandfather himself, who was public enemy No. 1 to artists about 10 years ago... I'll have to just take it one film at a time...

Now, on to the way more fun stuff...

I finally got to see Steve Sanguedolce's *Away* last night. The story of a twin searching for his brother who has gone awol from the family, the film's sometimes hard-boiled, sometimes poetic voice-over contemplates blood relations, the nature of identity, location, the conflicts between interior darkness and the nature and appeal of violence within a narrative structured through a simple detective story: Steve is searching in Thailand for his brother Sam, who is rumoured to be working on Coppola's *Apocalypse Now*. It intertwines footage from *Apocalypse Now*, home video of Thailand, shots from the making-of doc *Heart of Darkness*, experimentally shot footage treated into abstraction to allow us access to contemplation. It works, but I don't like what they do to the chicken...

Alejandro Ronceria's contemplative dance piece *A Hunter Called Memory* played last night. Future programmes include works on the Metro Days of Action by Cara Morton, Scott McLaren and Kika Thorne, *Loteria*, a mini-doc about the Mexican lottery by Roberto Ariganello and Frederico Hidalgo, a LIFT-sponsored "Homebrew" screening including short works by Lisa Hayes *Grandpa's Fingers*, Sarah Abbott *Froglight*, Jane Farrow — *Crackerbarrel My Ass*, Allyson Mitchell *Don't Bug Me* and your's truly *The Front Seat*, and on Friday night Christina's Zeidler's film *Galaxy Girls* appears as part of the "Astro Love and Moon Milk" series. I am especially looking forward to the retrospective "Homo Eroticus" the films of Wrik Mead."

The Festival is relaxed, accessible, engaged, edgy, given to spontaneous acts of fun, and it presents work that is entertaining, brave, funny, provocative, difficult you know, film work as we know and love it at its best. The fest is rounded out by installations, panel discussions, and a special link to the Interaccess >>iceflow>> websites.

THE SPONTANEITY IS CONTAGIOUS — GRAB YOUR CAMERAS AND GET OUT THERE TO MAKE WORK FOR NEXT YEAR'S FEST!

GIVE THE PEOPLE WHAT THEY WANT

3 Min. Rock Star

by Dominic Patten

How does one explain Jane Farrow and Allyson Mitchell's Three Minute Rock Star Super-8 extravaganza to some unfortunate soul who wasn't there? Well, one can't really, except to say that Jane and Allyson's efforts, and those of all the people who helped out, warrant their ascension to semi-deity status among independent filmmakers...

Three Minute Rock Star was held at the 360 on March 30, 1997. It consisted of almost 40 short super-8 films shot by a wide and varied group of people from various non-film backgrounds and professions. My favourite was the anonymously directed *Sluts With Guts*, but I can't help myself, I

have a soft spot for honest vandalism, especially of advertising billboards. The films, in style, topic and story-telling, were as varied as the people who made them. However there were a few traits common to most:

1. They were loads of fun.
2. Lots of sexy tunes.
3. Lots of creative and stylish cross-dressing.
4. Lots of good old low-budget mooning. You know, the kind where, if you look real hard, you can see the pimples on the actor's asses.
5. Lots of Dinosaur Rock references, but who can resist KISS?

Tons of people packed the 360. It was breathing room only. Local film events are too often just another case of a tree falling in the forest and nobody hearing it. But maybe, with a few more good kicks against the pricks as were delivered by Three Minute Rock Star, this won't be a problem much longer. I'm all for giving the people what they want, Three Minute Rock Star is so much tidier than throwing the Christians to the lions and the people love it.

WHAT THE PEOPLE MADE:

3 Min. Rock Star Program

The Wild wild world of Barb E., Barb E.
Don't take any shit and always carry a big stick.

Dinner Date, Lisa Cupoli
A girl's gotta look her best all the time.

Maybe later, Jackie O'Keefe
Somewhere between the couch and a jail cell Jackie O finally gets a life.

Blown By Barbara, Roy Mitchell
Number one fan gets to kneel at Babs' altar.

Packing, Kerri Grey & Nancy Grievson
Post-cock-rock for the sisterhood.

Queer Theorist Meets Jail Bait, Shauna Richeler-Lancit
Big words and high heels.

Not the One, Tracy Cocks
Around her world in 180 seconds.

Canada's #1 Air Guitarist, Chris Mills
A rare live appearance with adoring audience in tow.

Art Attack, Adam Bobker
One man's struggle to humanity the corporate machine.

Goodbye to Love, Shane Smith & Terry Finn
... Hello TV dinners.

How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Golem, Reena Katz
Locked out at the synagogue, a girl goes fishing.

Starlette, Janice Oakley & Paula Uyenaka
The primal scene of one man's resistance to dress code conformity is capture on film.

The Parkdale Wrestler, Stacey Case
What the hell is in those mashed potatoes?

Why She's A Rock Star, Gillian Frise
Rock goddess hits rock bottom.

Love Gun, Michael Caines
You're never too old to play with Ken.

French Style, Alex McLelland
Bored French kids seek out new thrills and cheap cologne.

Chow Down, Allyson Mitchell
Big fan gets dressed for the big concert.

By Appt. to Her Majesty the Queen, Sarah Ruddle & Lisa Gray
Compulsive do-gooder makes the rounds.

Tell the People, Susan Fairbairn
The Tory agenda comes into focus as the people don Mike's shades.

L'espionnes aux modes, Lisa Auyso & Ester Choi
A thriller caught between Get Smart and Mall Rats.

Cookie Cablo, Margo
Humpty's been a bad boy....

Some of Our Favorite Places, Joe Callaghan & Matthew Perry
A chosen family postcard.

Pretty Power, Lisa Foad & Leah Thompson
A not grrrl escape hatch from make-up mirrors and dresser drawers.

Kill Rockstars, Maria Prattas
Riot grrrl indie label is immortalized in snow and blood.

Snowman vs. Snowsuit, Deanne Lehtinen
The man against nature metanarrative gets a new spin.

Sluts with Guts, Artist Unknown
An instructional film from anonymous sources

Disco Love, Pam Gawn
Wait! Don't throw away those bikini line hairs.

Danke Shoen, Shauna Richeler Lancit & Alex McLelland
Animated vegetables for the pill-popping set.

The Echinacea Patient, Jane Farrow
Crystal-packin' mama gets dealed and healed the natural way.

Outta Sight, Lesia MacKany
Laudromat thief gets a make-over.

Outtakes: the film that was not supposed to be, Kate Sanagan & Denise Attilah
Life long friendship busts loose in a playground

Yippee Yahoo Unleashed, Eileen Yaghoobian
Yippee lands on earth and sends vacation slides home.

How to Stain an American Quilt, Ken Fraser
A Venezuelan travelogue with a sweaty ending.

untitled, Chandra Buluon
Three road-trippin' chicks burn up the streets of San Francisco.

Rock, Liz Singer
Rocker boy with prehensile thumbs tours historic Toronto.

Mainly Because of the Meat, Daniel Paquette
Grocery store check-out girls flash fry their minimum wage future.

Haberdash, Heather Cameron
I'm late, I'm late, for a very important date.

How to Cold Rock a Party, Brian Palic
Phat beats and cool treats.

Jammy's Hazing, Christy Cameron, Rowena O'Connor & Gillian Farnsworth
Mad Max girl gang goes on a recruiting drive.

First Person: **Janine Fung** **LIFT'S Filmmakers** **speak for themselves.**

Quintessential Films and Defining:
Is *Yentl* the greatest film ever made?
Only one woman is brave enough to ask...



A recent poll was conducted asking all LIFT Members to vote on what they thought was the quintessential film. The ballots were carefully counted and the conclusion was unanimous: the quintessential film of all time was *Yentl*, starring Barbra Streisand and directed by Barbra Streisand.

But before anyone plans on shooting themselves or seeking out and performing indecent acts with Q-tips upon all those who were in favour of Barbra. I should inform you that the poll was disqualified due to speculation that the "Barbra we're with you" society (an underground operation using the "I'm happy here" multi-bucks Coffee Time chain as a front) had something to do with the results. I must admit though I am quite a big fan of Barbra Streisand but you probably don't want to hear about it, or at least not until you're bedridden, eligible for a hearing aid and unable to chew large chunks of food.

So I'll spare you the Barbraology and ask you once

again what you think is the quintessential film? To be honest it's impossible to filter through all your favourite films; film is far too vast to even make such a conclusion and let's not forget about how personal film is — Barbra?

Instead of using the word quintessential I believe the word that should be used is groundbreaking. This way it represents film as we see it — as a vehicle of communication. The medium of film can be divided and subdivided into many areas: Areas which have been chartered and have yet to be chartered. Areas that are constantly being redefined as the questions we ask ourselves change — it is these questions that push the medium of film both forwards and inwards.

What are the questions you ask yourself when considering a groundbreaking film? I have a few basic ones that provide me with a starting point: Can a want be a need? Or can a need be a want? How often do we mistake one for another? What are the films we want to see and what

are the films we need to see? Does it really matter which one of those words we use? As long as we get our supposed message across then who really cares?

You have the films that sometimes you want to see just to be entertained, and then there are the films that you need to see because they provide you with new insights and ask you to explore. When film can answer both of these questions my process of defining a groundbreaking film begins. Of course, I'm simplifying a whole hell of a lot and realize that I haven't even begun to address technical approaches and aesthetics; I also realize that this process remains open to various objectivities, but when asked to write about the quintessential film I find myself analyzing how I analyze and I'm unable to come up with a single film that fits the description of quintessential.

but I can't seem to get the chanting. "Lownstien, lownstien, Lownstien", outta my head.





Are you experienced? Reflections from the owners of a small Exclusive basement film processing lab...

By Margaret wagner

Follow the arrows.

Descend the steps.

Open the heavy door

A waft of first developer catches in your nostrils. The door bangs shut behind you. A whirring noise. A buzzer

Suddenly you are moving forward against your will through images that flash before you abruptly in the colours of Japanese animation and disappear just as quickly.

Amusement park theme ride. The Haunted Barrel Works? No.. the small film lab...

Begin.

Whirr. Tall man dressed in black. Hair he's spent time on. Production jacket from Forever Knight. Making a rock video. Waits for your excited reaction... Waits for your excited reaction...

Whirr Earnest young women. Films herself 'giving birth' Writhes with labour pains. An inflated globe the size of beach ball catapults from between her legs. The birth of Gaia.

Whirr Video image. Young middle eastern couple. Dressed in western white. Dusty sun-drenched street. A member of the wedding party drags a reluctant goat forward.. Slits its throat. Couple smiles. Elton John music fills the air.. Romance is alive...

Whirr.. Daring auteur films himself squeezing mustard on his erect penis. He seems to be spelling "dick" You can see the Palme d'Or reflected in his eyes as he asks how you liked the film...

Whirr ... Film student... Attitude. Has filmed all of her footage out of focus. Wants you to focus it during a transfer to video... Hmm.

Whirr Home movies. Christmas tree. Present opening. Panelled rec room. Turkey. Stubby beer bottles. Dancing (usually the twist) Self-conscious smiles. Good times. Happy Birthday Baby Jesus.

Whirr... Shy kid badly dressed. Blushing... Shows you a ten minute film.. First film. Beautifully shot. You get goose bumps. Exhilaration.

Whirr Forty-five-year-old animator Still dropping acid. Still working on his film. Two G-I Joes in mortal combat over a pile of Special K, spray painted gold. He will be back.

Whirrr Video image. A dozen men. Sweat on their brows.. Baby circumcized before their troubled eyes. Riveted. Rabbi cuts. They can relate.

Whirrr. Wild-eyed. lunatic... Claims he works for National Geographic. Three minute Super 8 of a polar bear at the Metro Zoo. Says he shot the footage in the Arctic... You take his twenty-four hour pager number In case you spot wildlife nearby.

Whirr The heavy door is before you. You pull on the handle. Before the door can open your feet are swept out from under you The ride begins again..



Greg's big party!

Goodbye Greg! After 8 years in the trenches Installation artist/Oxberry feteshist Greg Woodbury is leaving the Co-op to find clean air, green pastures and a safe place where no one asks any questions...

Shown here with LIFT members (and friends from -- eek -- the world outside the Co-op) at his sold-out farewell bash in the Green Room behind the Poor Alex Theatre.



Greg and Jeff Sterne

Greg, Mazako Nagai and Paula Tiberius



Greg and Judith Doyle



Greg and new Technical Coordinator Mark Wihak



Look for Greg's installation work as he assumes his new identity in the outside world.



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